



# The Buzzard

## U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Heritage Society Newsletter

August, 2015

[uscgsheritage.org](http://uscgsheritage.org)

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## Society faces major decision

### The Board wants your opinion

The U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Heritage Society was established in 1978. Since that time, the energy among various select cadres of members to participate and lead has carried our small but vibrant organization forward. Presently, we appear to be running out of people to participate in running the functions of the Society, as opposed to supporting the Society by paying dues. This situation has recently diminished to the point that the viability of the Society on our current path is in question. During a long meeting last week, board members wrestled with a continuing discussion culminating in the need for a major decision: should the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Heritage Society expand into an all-NOAA social organization, or should the directors plan for a devolution and eventually wind-up the organization? The current status is unsustainable, it was agreed, given the lack of member involvement in the organization.

Rather than make an irreversible decision, however, the board is seeking membership feedback. Should we go with expansion or devolution?

**So, what will it be, members?  
Let us hear from you. Please  
take [this 3-minute survey](#) by  
September 15.**

Under the expansion pathway, members would need to volunteer for various functions in the Society and seek synergies with retirees, employees, and supporters of NOAA offices beyond USC&GS.

Under the devolution pathway, the board would plan to support various worthwhile events, locally and afar, and the NOAA Officer Corps Centennial Celebration in May 2017, but would start to arrange the transfer of the Society's scholarship funds to a functional program that would maintain the criteria specified by the fund's benefactors. Additionally, the Society would continue to support the Society's annual awards, including the Society-sponsored NOAA Distinguished Honor Graduate Award for the BOTC, through the next two years. We would maintain the Society's Facebook page, but The Buzzard would shift from four issues per year to two. We would no longer collect membership dues, nor would we recruit members.

Our Society now has slightly over 300 members; about one-third of them live in the Maryland-DC-Virginia area. As retirees shift their interests to the new "second half" of their lives, and young people focus on raising families and pursuing careers, it is more difficult to find volunteers for board positions, activity planning, and staffing activities.

"We would love to bring in new perspectives and new ideas, to advance the Society," explained one board member. "But we must face reality. Unless we hear from the membership, and get some real commitment for future involvement, we need to wind down."

So, what will it be, members? Let us hear from you. *Please take [this 3-minute survey](#) by September 15.*

## *New memorial dedicated to lost crew of Robert J. Walker*



Sunday, June 21, was World Hydrography Day. This year's observation was particularly noteworthy for NOAA, as they honored the lost crew members of the [U.S. Coast Survey Steamer Robert J. Walker](#) with a memorial dedication, attended by over 50 people at the Absecon Lighthouse in New Jersey.

The memorial has a commemorative geodetic marker placed in a compass rose on the grounds outside the lighthouse entrance. The rose also has the iconic image proposed in 2013 by NOAA Corps Basic Officer Training Class 102, in a design project led by Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Shoup.

On June 21, 1860, *Robert J. Walker* was hit by a commercial schooner while transiting from Norfolk to New York after months of surveying in the Gulf of Mexico. The ship sank 12 miles offshore, as they were heading to the Absecon Lighthouse after they were hit. Coast Survey lost twenty crew members that night, and another man died from his injuries the next day, in the largest single loss of life in NOAA history.

Dr. James Delgado, director of maritime heritage at National Marine Sanctuaries, led the event; Rear Adm. Gerd Glang, Coast Survey director, dedicated the memorial.

"With this memorial duly dedicated, we are assured that future generations will know what happened off these shores," Glang said. "They will remember the sacrifices made to make our nation's coasts safe. And they will give these crew members a permanent honor that was so long denied."

A historic hydrographer's bell rang for every crew member who lost their life, similar to the [memorial service held two years ago](#).

In expressing NOAA's appreciation for all involved in the project, Glang thanked two people in particular. First, he noted the persistent efforts of Skip Theberge, NOAA historian and retired NOAA commissioned officer.

"I would dare say that very few people in NOAA even knew about the Robert J. Walker until Captain Theberge told us about this tragic event," Glang said. "It is because of his knowledge — and especially his persistence in telling the story — that NOAA made the effort to find and identify the Walker."

This permanent memorial was made possible with funding from NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, NOAA Preserve America Initiative and the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey Heritage Society. A special thanks to the executive director and staff at the Absecon Lighthouse for providing a special setting for a very special purpose.



Dr. James Delgado, Rear Admiral Gerd Glang, and Cheryl Oliver at the Walker memorial dedication.



Cheryl Oliver and James Delgado, at the new signage installed at the Absecon Lighthouse. The display tells the story of the wreck, and lists each lost crew member by name.



## *USC&GS Longest line of triangulation*

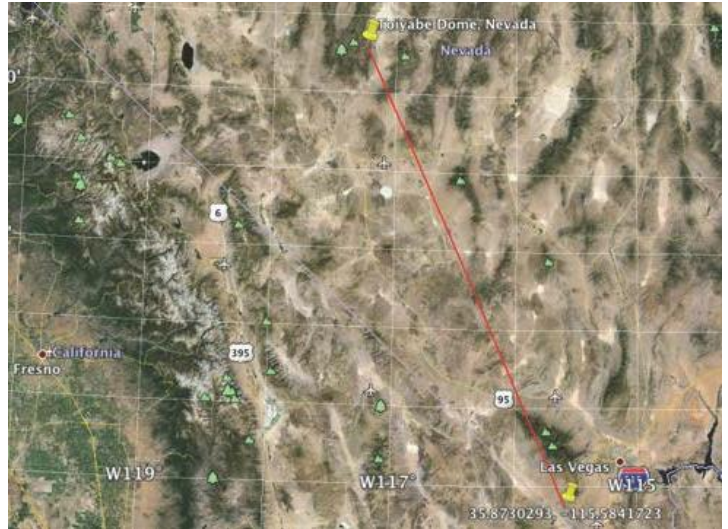
By George Leigh

While researching USC&GS history for the 200th Anniversary Celebration several years ago, I found articles stating that the longest line of triangulation ever observed by the USC&GS was 192 miles long. This line was in California and part of the Transcontinental Arc of Triangulation. The line ran from Mount Shasta to Mount Helena, both in California. One of the articles even bragged that the line was longer than any observed by the Europeans. However, I recently found an article in the *Coast Survey Bulletin* that put the longest line at about 227 miles.

(reprint from *Coast Survey Bulletin*)

### LONG LINES IN TRIANGULATION

The longest line in the Coast and Geodetic Survey triangulation is that from Toiyabe Dome, Nev., to Ragged Peak, Nev., about 227 miles. This was observed only in one direction. The line from Mount Shasta, Cal., to Mount Helena, Cal., is 192 miles in length, and that from Mount Ellen, Utah, to Mount Uncompahgre, Colo., is 183 miles. The triangle formed by Wheeler Peak, Nev., Mount Nebo, Utah, and Pilot Peak, Nev., has sides of 148, 148, and 141 miles, respectively.



## *Those were the days...*

Thanks to Kevin Shaw for sharing this picture (via Barbara Schantz and Carol Heflin). Just look at these bright and eager faces from the mid-1980s NOAA Chart Information Section!



Kneeling in front are Greg Norris and Norman Banks (section chief). Behind them, left to right, are Keith Van Ness, Kevin Shaw, Ann Jacobson, Lee Gudger (behind Ann), Jim Dailey, Peggy Woodard, Carol Heflin, Curt Loy and Harold "Buddy" Schantz.

## *Society recognizes new NOAA officer*

David Hall, Society secretary, presented the NOAA Distinguished Honor Graduate Award to Ensign Terril Efird, at the BOTC graduation ceremony in May 2015.

Prior to joining NOAA, Efird was a research coordinator at the Alaska SeaLife Center. Concurrently, he worked two summer seasons in Antarctica as a research and support diver. He graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science in marine biology, and earned his Masters of Science in marine biology from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2012.

Ensign Efird is currently serving on NOAA Ship *Hi'ialakai*.



## *Annual meeting & luncheon scheduled for December 10*

Plan now to attend the Society's Annual Meeting & Winter Luncheon on Thursday, December 10. We had a wonderful experience last year at Rockville's **Manor Country Club**, and so we'll have the luncheon there again this year. Cost of the luncheon will remain at \$25 per person (the same as last year). There will be a cash bar.

Watch your email for more details, coming in October.

## *In Memoriam - CDR Peter M. Connors*

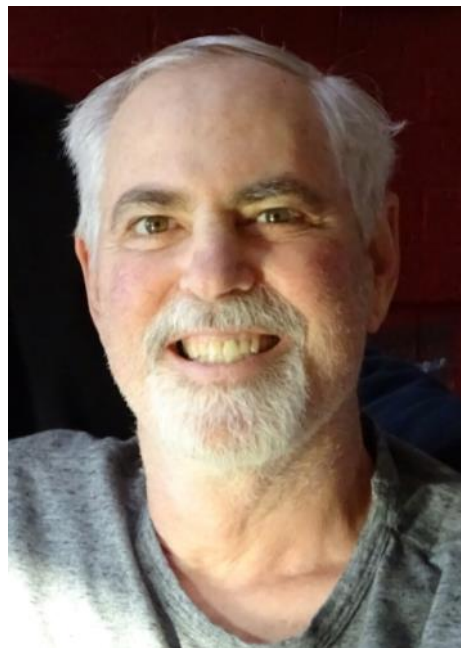
Retired NOAA Commander Peter Michael Connors passed away on January 13, 2015 at Maine's Mid Coast Hospital, after a brief hospital stay, from complications of prostate cancer.

After receiving a BS in chemistry at the University in New Hampshire, Peter joined the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corp in 1978. His first ship assignments were on the NOAA ships *Rude* and *Heck*, but in 1983 he became an aviator and a specialist in aerial surveying and photogrammetry.

Peter received the Leo O. Colbert Medal for recognition of his outstanding contribution to precise aircraft navigation through his integration of the Global Positioning System and digital mapping display systems.

Commander Connors retired from NOAA in 1999, after 21 years of service.

He is survived by his wife April, his children, sister, and many family members from New England, Texas and Washington.



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## *Have you "liked" us?*

If you have a Facebook page, we invite you to join our closed Facebook group. Just click on **U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Heritage Society**, and ask to join. One of our administrators will approve you right away! We invite everyone to share memories, pictures, and news of Society get-togethers...

